Polio eradication

†1965. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that by the end of 2004, India had to become a polio-free country so that it would be included in the list of polio-free countries in the year 2007;

(b) if so, whether the target has been achieved by the country in this year; and

(c) if not, whether it will not damage the prestige of India in the world?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir. Although India has not reached zero polio status by the end of year 2004, it has made significant progress in polio eradication. Intensified efforts made in India during 2004 resulted in 136 cases of polio being detected in the country during 2004 compared to 225 during 2003. The number of infected districts reduced from 87 in 2003 to 44 in 2004. This is the lowest number of polio cases and lowest number of infected districts ever in the country since polio eradication efforts were started.

(c) The progress made by India was appreciated at a meeting of the Health Ministers of the Asian polio-endemic countries held in Geneva during the first week of February, 2005. The international community was confident that India was on the right track to eradicate the disease very soon. This optimism regarding India amongst the international experts was due to the fact that India had localized the disease to the smallest geographical area ever and the country was taking appropriate steps towards polio eradication.

Mobile public call office in trains

1966. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that BSNL has initiated mobile public call office in trains;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the details of this innovative initiative; and

(c) by when this facility is going to be extended in all trains in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Telephone booths at the railway Stations

1967. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the operators of public telephone booths running on the railway stations have been asked to stop the functioning forthwith;

(b) if so, the reason therefor and whether Government are aware that most of the booth operators are disabled persons; and

(c) whether Government would review the decision, if any in the matter and whether the physically handicapped persons are given preference to operate the booths in the railway stations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (c) Instructions have been issued that physically handicapped persons who are presently running Subscriber Trunk Dialling/ International Subscriber Dialling/Public Call Office booths at railway stations and whose contracts are expiring and not due for extension as per *contract may be allowed to continue and their contract may be extended* after expiry upto 27.4.2007 provided their working is satisfactory. As per extent instructions, 25% booths have been reserved for physically handicapped persons.

Electrification of railway stations in Punjab

1968. SHRI VARINDER SINGH BAJWA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the amount spent by Government on electrification of railway stations in Punjab during the last three years, year-wise;

(b) the names of railway stations electrified during the period; and